DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 143 597 SO 010 275

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TITLE The Effects of the Social Science Community on Education Decision Makers: An Historical Perspective Research Report.
PUB DATE Sep 77
NOTE 25p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Curriculum Development; *Decision Making; Educational Change; *Educational History; Educational Objectives; Elementary Secondary Education; Foundations of Education; History; Public Education; Relevance (Education); Social Factors; *Social Sciences; *Social Studies; Teacher Influence

ABSTRACT

The report chronicles social scientists' influence on the American public education system since 1900, with emphasis on social forces, educational reform movements, and individuals. The first section discusses the origins of the social studies curriculum, early attempts of the American Historical Association to establish history and government instruction, and the National Education Association's proposal of a Problems of Democracy course in 1916. The remainder of the paper focuses on educators and events that influenced the curriculum. Social scientists and educators discussed include John Dewey, William Kilpatrick, Mary Kelty, Ernest Horn, Howard Wilson, Byron Massialas, and Jerome Bruner. Historical events designated as particularly significant for social studies development are World War I and II, the Korean conflict, and Sputnik. Important trends within the public education system include the child-centered activity movement, development of curriculum specialists, discovery learning, reflective thinking, the New Social Studies, emphasis on methods, environmental and career education, and systems analysis. The conclusion is that social scientists have played an increasingly important role in educational decision making since 1900 by incorporating social science subjects into the curriculum, advocating social education programs, stressing relevance, and preparing students for social change. (Author/DB)

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AUG 26 1977

The Effects of the Social Science Community on Education Decision Makers: An Historical Perspective

Research Report

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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SP 010 375

September 1977

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September 1977

INTRODUCTION

Today, social scientists are well entrenched in the education decision making process as determiners of instructional programs, but this integration has taken place only since the early 1900's. How did this state of proximity congruency[1] take place? What are some of the social forces and events, as well as people, of both past and present that effected this process?

PERSPECTIVE

Since its infant beginnings the American education system has been used to *Americanize* the nation's immigrant population; an attempt to assimilate all youth into the American culture and society and to implant American values in them.[2]

Prior to 1815, history was nearly a non-existant subject of instruction in American education. With the passage of a Massachusetts law (1827), requiring that United States History be taught in the state's secondary schools, history became a respected discipline of knowledge.

Realizing the neglect of history instruction in the

elementary grades, the COMMITTEE OF TEN's Conference On History, Civic Government, and Political Economy (1892) recommended the organization of an eight year program of history and government instruction. Although the proposal suggested only a smattering of Greek, Roman, English and American histories, it was a step toward the establishment of a program in the school curriculum. The AMERICAN HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION's Committee of Seven (1896) proposed a secondary school history program for grades nine through twelve. The A.H.A.'s Committee of Five (1907) proposed a three year history curriculum for high school students which encouraged the study of economics and commercial geography. Thus, by the early 1900's there was evidence to indicate the emerging influence of social scientists in the field of public school education.

With the dawn of the Twentieth Century social scientists were becoming a moving social force willing to have their presence felt in the arenas of public opinion and formal education. The NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION's Committee on Social

Studies (1916) coined the term *social studies*[3] and proposed the creation of a twelfth grade Problems of Democracy course. While there was a gradual trend toward making the social sciences/social studies part of every student's instruction it took noted social scientists such as John Dewey (1902)[4], Harold Rugg (1928) and William Heard Kilpatrick (1925) to promote the concept of *real world* studies. Kilpatrick (1926) felt that the school should become a place of actual experiences which provides for self-directed purposive learning.

By 1916, John Dewey's child centered activity movement and George Counts' (1932) emphasis on a social reconstruction curriculum greatly influenced Carleton Washburne's Winnetka Plan, William Heard Kilpatrick's project method, William Wirt's platoon system in Gary, Indiana and Henry Harap's (1937) economics oriented curriculum approach. In 1919, the social, political and economic effects of World War I led many social scientists to note that the old civilization was passing away and that formal education must be linked to life. Dewey's (1900) concept of the school as an *embryonic community* evidenced

a growing concern among social sicentists that the school should reflect the life of the larger society and should have some improving effect upon it. In the early 1920's William Wirt applied the concept of embryonic community education to the Gary, Indiana urban school system and thus provided a working model for other schools to replicate.

While Mary Kelty (1953) argued for a history program based upon pupil needs, interests and maturity levels, George Counts (1932) promoted the idea that the school and its teachers must assume the task of reconstituting the democratic tradition and work toward a new social order. In 1932, historian Charles Beard (1929) contended that the contemporary cultural setting should form the basis of social studies content selection and instruction. In his opinion, serious consideration should be given to the economic, political and cultural factors which deeply influence and effect the individual and society.

During the 1930's there emerged a new force of instructional reform *within* the field of public school education; the

curriculum specialist[5]. Until the emergence of the specialist most education planners and decision makers were generalists in areas of curriculum and instruction. The curriculum specialist was a resource person trained in the content, methodologies, techniques, skills and strategies of given disciplines of knowledge, and played a vital role in nurturing the process of proximity congruency between social scientists and education decision makers. The specialist bridged the proximity gap between the more-traditional, administrative oriented education decision makers and the social scientists who served as initiators of curriculum and instruction reform in the public schools. They welcomed the counsel of social scientists in efforts to upgrade instruction and to incorporate the school based learning process into the real world community - as part of the *expanding environment* philosophy of curriculum organization[6]. Ernest Horn (1937) provided direction for instructional program development when he emphasized learning as a discovery process and promoted the idea that the method-of-study utilized is of greater importance to learning than the knowledge acquired.

From 1937 through 1954 social scientists came to play an ever increasing role in the education decision making process vis-a-vis the clarification of school goals. During World War II and the Korean Conflict it was deemed necessary that America have citizens who believed in and practiced the concepts of democracy and freedom. The school became a bulwark of democracy; citizenship education was emphasized and the social studies disciplines were charged with creating *model citizens*. In 1945, while the United States faced domestic economic and social problems, communist conquests in eastern Europe created new foreign challenges for the American people. Howard Wilson (1957) promoted the development of socially efficient individuals and insisted that the public schools now face the task of educating citizens to assume international responsibilities. Edgar Wesley (1958) called for social studies curricula adaptable to social change. By the late 1940's and early 1950's social scientists were having a marked effect upon the future course of the nation's public education system.

The accomplishments of SPUTNIK (1957) shocked the free world and challenged the value of American education in the emerging Space Age. Proponents of a *new* education system argued for reform of the existing curriculum - placing an emphasis on empirical studies. James Conant (1964) called for renewed mathematics and science programs. The emphasis placed on the *new* social studies during the 1960's resulted from the scientific and technological revolutions of the 1950's. In 1961, the U.S. Office of Education launched PROJECT SOCIAL STUDIES[7] in quest of new concepts, methodologies, structure and evaluative techniques. The academic oriented social scientists were now in a position not only to effect education decision makers and curriculum specialists but also pre-service and in-service teachers vis-a-vis training programs and workshops. The National Defense Education Act (NDEA) provided summer training programs for classroom teachers in the newer methods of the social studies.

As a result of PROJECT SOCIAL STUDIES a new breed of social scientists emerged calling for the creation of instruc-

tional programs which emphasized a systematic process of reflective thinking. Donald Oliver[8] (1966), Maurice Hunt (1955) and Byron Massialas (1965) argued that in order to prepare today's students for tomorrow's world the *new* social studies has to focus attention on the persistent problems of society, equip individuals to cope with social situations, and draw knowledge from the several disciplines. Edgar Wesley and Stanley Wronski (1958) promoted the idea that there is a need to shift emphasis in social studies teaching from the *what* of the social studies (content) to the *how* of the social scientist (methods). The *new* social studies attempted to create functional programs of instruction which emphasized Jerome Bruner's (1960) concept of structure and directly involved students in Edwin Fenton's (1966) inductive approach to inquiry and learning.

Today, social scientists not only counsel education decision makers but also effect social studies content and structure in public school education as evidenced by the social experience concept, the use of primary and secondary

source materials, the inquiry approach to learning, and the global education movement. These and other social studies pedagogical approaches place a premium on the application of the several *special methods* skills to the student learning process. Because social scientists are the assessors and chroniclers of man's past and present and predictors/watch-guards of the future, those education decision makers wanting to make the formal schooling process more-relevant to the needs of students must look to social scientists for guidance and direction.

In the investigative fields of career education, environmental education and community based education there is a quest for relevance to the real world and its inhabitants. Kenneth Hoyt (1973) promotes the expansion of career education into the elementary as well as the secondary school grades in an attempt to rekindle pride in work among students. Donald Super (1963) has defined career education as a developmental process involving information attainment and learned skills utilization. The fields of social studies and career

education are concerned with helping students become adults who can cope successfully with changing societal patterns and requirements. Career education involves intellectual strategies which are a key part of the social studies approach, e.g., inquiry, values clarification, problem solving, and decision making. Washburne's concept of *common essentials*[9] is being renewed and incorporated into the curriculum.

In environmental education emphasis is placed on the socialization of the individual; an attempt to insure that students leave school as better citizens equipped with a sense of environmental stewardship. Noel McInnis (1972), R. F. Allen (1973), R. O. Peters (1976) and others promote the process of attitude and values development regarding a personal environmental ethic of perceptual self-denial and conservation.

The current emphasis on the community school is fertile ground for social scientists. The community school is not merely a school physically located within a social setting but is, instead, a vital part of the community. Community

based learning experiences provide students with opportunities to be practicing social scientists; opportunities to learn and to apply discipline related skills in real world settings. Since W. H. Kilpatrick social scientists have urged the creation of instructional programs which utilize the natural, social and human resources of the community as field based learning environments.

Another facet of the social scientists' contribution to education decision making is program planning and systems analysis. Daniel Stufflebeam (1971) and Michael Scriven (1967) have developed models and proposed ways by which education decision makers can improve their operational processes. The CIPP, PERT and CRITICAL PATH models as well as the process of planning, implementation, evaluation and revision have been introduced into the education process and used extensively by decision makers who closely resemble their counterparts in business and industry regarding an emphasis on accountability, analysis and efficiency.

STATEMENT

Since the early 1900's there has been growing evidence of a marked effect on the present and future of American education by social scientists.

One key advisory role played by social scientists vis-a-vis education decision making has been the identification and enumeration of the several social science related abilities and skills which should be incorporated into the learning process. Each social science/social studies discipline is unique in its methodologics, techniques of investigation and vocabulary. Students must have the opportunity to learn, to apply and to reinforce mastery of skills in real world settings.

In those few instances over the past fifty to seventy-five years, when education decision makers were somewhat reluctant to involve social scientists in the process, individuals such as John Dewey, George Counts[10] and Charles Beard (1932) made their presence felt by advocating and popularizing social education oriented programs. At the University of Chicago Laboratory School (1896) and in Winnetka,

Illinois, Dewey and Washburne, following in the footsteps of Francis Wayland Parker, the *father of progressive education*, established showcase programs which had marked effect on the future of American education.

As long as the American education process attempts to make formal schooling relevant to the varied abilities, interests and needs of individuals there will be a place for social scientists in that process. Man has an innate desire to explore and to learn about himself and his world. After all, the American education system is a social experiement for human betterment and social scientists have an important role to play in that on-going process.

Since the early 1900's the state of proximity congruency between social scientists and education decision makers has steadily improved to the point where, today, it is difficult to clearly define the separate role(s) of decision makers and social scientists in the process of educational change. As was the case after World Wars I and II, our contemporary life and society is changing. We are approaching Huxley's *1984*

and a possible new social order. If students are to be properly apprised of social change and are to be prepared for that change then social scientists must, and will, continue to work within the formal education system.

NOTES

1. Proximity congruency refers to the spatial relationship(s); the relative perceived distance, between two or more animate or inanimate objects.

2. Ellwood P. Cubberley (Sanford) contended that the American education system was a powerful social force in the growth and development of the nation.

3. Edgar B. Wesley (1958) defined *social studies* as that portion of the several social science disciplines content simplified and incorporated into the public school curriculum for pedagogical purposes.

4. In the early 1900's American education was identified by many progressives as the isolation of traditional education from reality. Dewey contended that education needed to develop student contacts with real things and materials and involve them in the actual process of *things* manipulation. He formulated the aim of American education in social terms and couched its effect and success in the realm of direct, real life experiences.

5. Franklin Bobbitt argued that education is preparation for

adulthood and that the job of the curriculum and the curriculum maker is to clarify and detail the full range of human experiences - with a view of building a curriculum that would prepare the individual for life.

6. The expanding environment philosophy of curriculum organization promotes the concept that the curriculum broadens as the pupil gains additional experiences vis-a-vis expanded learning opportunities and greater personal maturity.

7. Project Social Studies sites included Ohio State University (James Shaver 1966), Syracuse University (Roy Price 1958), Carnegie Institute of Technology (Edwin Fenton 1966), and Harvard University (Donald Oliver 1966).

8. D. W. Oliver and J. P. Shaver (1966) defined a number of dimensions of teaching in order to identify the *characteristics of teaching* - for purposes of effecting improvement in teacher training programs.

9. Within the context of the Winnetka Plan the *common essentials* of the curriculum were those knowledges and skills needed by all students for social living.

10. Counts preached that education must face social issues courageously and establish organic relationships with the community. The school and its teachers were charged with assuming the task of reconstituting the democratic tradition and working toward a new social order.

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